### Solano County Board of Supervisors Response to Grand Jury September 2, 2008

#### Part I

# Foster Care Home Inspection and Licensing

Issued June 12, 2008

Solano County Department of Health and Social Services and Board of Supervisors responses to the Grand Jury Report:

#### Finding #1

in 2006 and 2007, of the 105 foster parent applicants who completed Section A, only 47 completed Sections A and B of the licensing process.

# Department of Health and Social Services Response to Fining #1

Solano County Health & Social Services agrees with this finding. However, it's important to note that there are valid reasons that potential foster parents do not complete Section B. The foster parent application process begins with a requirement to complete Section A only. Potential foster parents are required to complete Section B after an initial screening of their application (Section A) and participation in 27 hours of required training. Potential foster parent candidates who are either unable or unwilling to complete the initial training requirement do not progress to the second half of the

The 27- hour training curriculum includes comprehensive information on what is required of foster parents and assists them in understanding the full impact of this responsibility. After attending the training, and learning about the responsibilities of foster parenting, some decide not to proceed. In addition to those candidates who self select out of the licensing process, there are a small number of candidates who are deemed unsuitable by the licensing staff for one reason or another.

## Board of Supervisors Response to Finding #1

The Board of Supervisors concurs with the Department's response to the Grand Jury's Finding.

### Recommendation #1

To increase the success rate, the Solano County Health and Social Services Department should research reasons for the non-completion of Section B of the

# Department of Health and Social Services Response to Recommendation #1

Solano County Health and Social Services has not yet implemented the Grand Jury recommendation, but plans to do so by the end of September. The Ombudsperson for

Child Welfare Services will invite potential foster parents who did not complete Section B (excluding those disqualified by the department) to participate in a focus group to discuss their reasons for not completing the application process.

## Board of Supervisors Response to Recommendation #1

The Board of Supervisors concurs with the Department's response to the Grand Jury's Recommendation.

#### Finding #2

There is a shortage of foster homes in Solano County. Children often are placed outside of the County or with independent agencies.

## Department of Health and Social Services Response to Finding #2

Solano County Health and Social Services partially agrees with the finding. While there are several benefits to placing children in local foster homes, there are often valid reasons for out of County placements. The most recent County data (as of June 2008), reflects 370 children in placement with 84 placed out of county (23%). Of those 84, 37 were placed with relatives outside of the County. Twenty-five children required placement in specialized group homes to meet their emotional/behavioral needs or were provided with specialized care (i.e. children who are non-ambulatory, children placed in tribal foster homes or children who need a home approved by North Bay Regional Center). Twenty-two children were placed in surrounding counties within an hour's drive of Solano County.

### Board of Supervisors Response to Finding #2

The Board of Supervisors concurs with the Department's response to the Grand Jury's Finding.

### Recommendation #2

Solano County Health and Social Services Department should conduct more advertising through community outreach to attract potential foster families.

# Department of Health and Social Services Response to Recommendation #2

Solano County Health and Social Services partially implemented the Grand Jury recommendation with the inauguration of the Solano County Heart Gallery in November 2007. This program highlights the need for both adoptive and foster homes for children by publicizing information about children seeking placement. The Heart Gallery photographs have been displayed in the jury waiting room in Fairfield, many County libraries and in the County Administration Center lobby. In addition, community outreach is conducted by hosting tables at local events (e.g. farmers markets, local festivals and

H&SS will continue to work with the foster parent Recruitment, Development and Support of Resource Families work group, comprised of local foster parents, to enhance and further develop the outreach plan for recruitment of foster homes. H&SS has requested that the County Public Information Officer provide assistance in recruiting foster parents. The target completion date for the enhanced community advertising and marketing plan is October of 2008.

## Board of Supervisors Response to Recommendation #2.

The Board of Supervisors concurs with the Department's response to the Grand Jury's Recommendation.

#### Findina #3

The use of independent Foster Family Agencies due to special placement needs more than doubles the County's cost.

## Department of Health and Social Services Response to Finding #3

Solano County Health & Social Services partially agrees with the finding. The rate paid to the Foster Family Agency (FFA) is higher than the basic foster family rate; however. the FFA provides additional services, such as transporting children to visit with parents and/or siblings, transporting children to counseling and to appointments with their attorney, working with schools around children's special needs, providing respite care for foster parents for stress relief or time away, etc. All of these support services are included as part of the rate paid to the FFA. A child with special needs, who is placed with a County licensed foster home, would require additional services (multiple doctors' appointments for example) thus increasing cost for that placement beyond the basic placement cost. As a result when all of the support services provided are considered, the higher rate paid to the FFA does not result in as much additional cost to the County as it may appear.

## Board of Supervisors Response to Finding #3

The Board of Supervisors concurs with the Department's response to the Grand Jury's Finding.

### Recommendation #3

Use the Parent Resources for Information Development and Education (PRIDE) program to include specialized training to accommodate children with special placement needs such as language requirements, multiple siblings or similar needs.

# Department of Health and Social Services Response to Recommendation #3

This recommendation requires further analysis. The Deputy Director for Child Welfare Services has already met with the Training Specialist for the Solano Community College Foster and Kinship Care Education program which offers the PRIDE program. The PRIDE program provides training to potential foster parents on the needs of foster children, the expectations of foster parents, the functions of Child Welfare Services, the role of the Juvenile Court, etc. Not all of the foster parents enrolled in PRIDE are willing to care for children with special needs. The Community College has a plan under consideration to provide additional, specialized training to those PRIDE participants who are willing to accommodate children with special needs.

It should be noted that the difficulty in recruiting foster parents to care for children with special needs is not primarily an issue of training. As noted above, children with special needs require specific types of support services. The FFAs were developed by the State in order to provide these additional specialized services for children with special needs, and to provide additional support to the foster parents who care for them. Prospective foster parents interested in caring for special needs children are more likely to work through an FFA because it is able to offer the higher level of care, support and

## Board of Supervisors Response to Recommendation #3

The Board of Supervisors concurs with the Department's response to the Grand Jury's Recommendation.